

Top leaders in China who have expressed their support
of qizong and EFHB study: (1987)

Senior Politicians

Wan Li

Ye Jianying

Wang Zhen

Ren Zong

Ren Chong

Wang ~~Ren~~ Renzhong

Hu Qiaomu, the standing member of the Party's Central Political Bureau in charge of propaganda, said in a reported meeting in 1987:

"We should mobilize every unit in our society to study *zizhong* science. I believe it is a very fundamental scientific effect and absolutely not superstitious fiction. This is not something about which one 'should not propagandize, or make any comment', but a topic that needs great efforts to publicize and facilitate its development to serve the four modernizations."

Note: The inner quotation is from the previously-referred-to May 13, 1982 directive of Hu Yaobang, the former Party general secretary who had ~~subsequently~~ been subsequently removed from power. His official statement had been "The EFHB is not [an officially accepted] subject for our scientific research. Before proof of the phenomena is firmly established, our media ~~shall~~ should not propagandize or make any comment about any test or experiment."

qigong departments. It is estimated that at least 20 million people in P.R.C., many of them well educated, were practicing qigong in some form and at some level by the end of 1987 (Yi, 1987). Foreign visitors were astonished to see that the qigong learners blocked parks, courtyards, and small streets while doing their morning or evening exercises.

It is obvious that the qigong movement and the reappearance of EFHB news reports (usually in relation to qigong practices) could not have occurred in this tightly controlled country without a decision by the Party to change its earlier ruling. This was done informally. Instead of issuing a new document, the instructions were given privately and gradually by some of the Party's senior leaders.

It is widely believed that many leaders in the highest positions became interested in qigong and convinced of the reality of EFHB. In the first phase there were many specially arranged psi demonstrations, some privately performed, in an effort by some of the researchers to gain governmental support. As time went on, it was found that a better way to obtain support was to let qigong masters take care of the health of the leaders. Countless healing sessions were held, and a wide variety of effects were demonstrated. Some leaders reportedly started to practice qigong themselves. It was said, for instance, that Deng Xiaoping, the party and military head, became interested in qigong and asked to watch the videotapes of a qigong master's therapeutic lectures (see later). Other leaders showed their support publicly. Hu Qiaomu, the standing member of the Party's Central Political Bureau in charge of propaganda, said in a reported meeting in 1987:

We should mobilize every unit in our society to study qigong science. I believe it is a very fundamental scientific effect and absolutely not superstitious fiction. This is not something about which one "should not propagandize, or make any comment", but a topic that needs great efforts to publicize and facilitate its development to serve the four modernizations [Li, 1988, p. 315].

This speech is clearly contrary to the former ruling and, though not mentioned, the inner quotation is from the previously-referred-to May 13, 1982, directive of Hu Yaobang, the former Party general secretary who had been subsequently removed from power. Other top leaders who expressed their support of qigong and of EFHB study were Wan Li, Ye Jianying, Wang Zhen, Pen Zeng, Pen Chong, and Wang Renzhong, almost all of them senior politicians. As final evidence of the acceptability of qigong and psi research, the application presented seven years earlier by the preliminary committee under the translated name "Chinese Human-Body Science Association" (and "China Anthropic Science Association") was finally approved on May 3, 1987, under a new officially-translated-name as the "Chinese Society of Somatic Science" (CSSS). Mr. Zhang Zhenhuan was elected as the CSSS's first president to honor his contributions, although he had retired from his military commission by then. The *NJ* also resumed publishing research papers explicitly on psi topics in 1987, though they are often qigong-related now. Thus, parapsychology was officially accepted as a legitimate field of science in P.R.C.

An important change affecting the qigong movement occurred in 1987 when Dr. Qian Xuesen was named chairman of the Chinese Science and Technology Association, the semi-governmental commission that coordinates the nation's scientific research. Dr. Qian, although famous, had held no position outside the military before, but now he was granted the right to guide the nation's science policy. He did not waste this opportunity and soon gave instructions urging the furtherance of somatic science. He is quoted as saying: "Chinese qigong is modern science and technology--high technology--absolutely top technology" (Yi, 1987).

What caused Dr. Qian to offer so strong an endorsement? Aside from the prize-winning film described in Phase II above, we do not know what may have been achieved by defense-related teams such as ISME. It seems certain, however, that Dr. Qian was strongly impressed by the results more recently reported in Academia Sinica's *Shengwu Wuli Xuebao* (*Acta Biophysica*

Prof. Lin Shukuang of the Physics Department at Beijing Teacher's College formally established, in the 1980's, a "Comprehensive Technology Institute" ~~which does~~ to do work in somatic science. It has gained official support from the Chinese National Science Foundation as well as state, ministry, and commission levels.

According to a Chinese source in 1990 - "Evidently the senior leaders of China, now firmly in power, are favorable to the public study of qigong and related EFHB."

It is assumed as a matter of course in P.R.C. that psychic ability, as well as other

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Parapsychology in the People's Republic of China: 1979 - 1989

Leping Zha¹ & Tron McConnell

ABSTRACT: The senior author, a graduate student of physics in the U.S.A., provides from his personal involvement, an informal history of the parapsychology movement in the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) over the last decade. From 1979 to 1982, research into ESP (and PK) among children swept through China. This research upon what was called "exceptional functions of the human body" (EFHB), gave rise to a sizable literature and to commitments, pro and con, among scientists. Two protagonists emerged to carry the battle to the highest political forum. The opponent of EFHB was an eminent social scientist and vice-chairman of the Chinese Academy of Science. The proponent was a physicist regarded internationally as "the father of Chinese space technology." After a public debate in the press, ending in a collaborative test of the country's best-known psychics, the Communist Party ruled that both sides must cease public discussion but that unsupported research could proceed quietly. From 1983 to 1986, interest shifted to gifted adult psychics. Research was conducted partly at major universities but primarily under defense-related auspices in Beijing, where gross PK effects were reported. Meanwhile, privately circulated publications fanned civilian research interest in parapsychology under the ancient rubrics of "qigong" and "Traditional Chinese Medicine." In 1987 a set of seminal PK experiments was reported in the *Acta Biophysica Sinica* from Qinghua University. From 1987 to 1989 interest in qigong grew until, according to news reports, there were 20 million participants, including top leaders of the Communist Party. Restraints on research were quietly lifted. Official approval was granted to a "China Society of Somatic Science" for the study of EFHB. The space scientist mentioned earlier was made responsible for coordinating all of Chinese science. The favoring of parapsychology has apparently persisted despite the Beijing events of the Spring of 1989. Meanwhile, a divergence of the popular qigong movement and scientific EFHB research has begun. The greater prevalence and strength of psi effects reported from the P.R.C., as compared to laboratory experience in the West, raises a question as to the role of the West's Cartesian cultural heritage in determining empirical reality.

¹In accordance with Chinese custom, Chinese family names precede given names in this paper except in the author's by-line, where the U.S.A. custom of family-name-last is followed to facilitate indexing.

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Official reaction

(U) "Research into human paranormal abilities was given a bad name following the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee. As of 1982 there were still some papers lashing out against it on the front pages. Although there have been some changes, to this day it has not yet been set right. Therefore, in the eyes of many people it is connected to 'magic' and 'sorcery'."

"Comrade Qian Xuelin has repeatedly pointed out that 'research in somatic science may lead to a new scientific revolution in the 21st century.' It 'may also be a greater scientific revolution than those of quantum mechanics and the theory of relativity in the 20th century'."